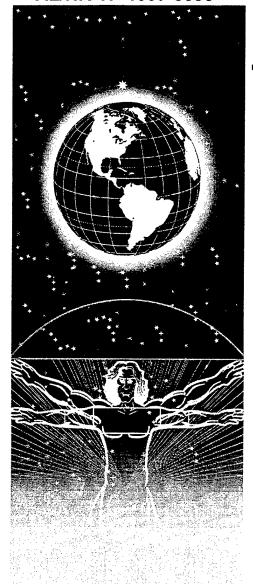
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# UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ARMSTRONG LABORATORY

# MALE AND FEMALE CAUSAL MODELS OF PILOT SKILL ACQUISITION: A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION

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## **PREFACE**

This effort was conducted under Work Unit 1123A101, Pilot Selection and Classification Support, which is dedicated to research into the selection and classification of US Air Force aircrew personnel. The Laboratory Principal Investigator was Dr Thomas R. Carretta. The authors thank Mr Paul Rioux for his assistance in the development of the databases used in this research study.

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#### MALE AND FEMALE CAUSAL MODELS OF PILOT SKILL ACQUISITION: A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION

#### INTRODUCTION

Historically, measures of general cognitive ability, g, and prior job knowledge have demonstrated consistent validity against pilot training performance (Carretta & Ree, 1994; Olea & Ree, 1994; Ree & Carretta, 1996). More recently, Ree, Carretta, and Teachout (1995) using latent variable path analysis, have demonstrated that g works through job knowledge to cause pilot performance. This finding--that g works through job knowledge to cause performance-- is consistent across studies of numerous jobs (Hunter, 1986). The current experiment evaluated a previously confirmed causal model of pilot training performance on separate male and female samples.

#### **Male-Female Differences**

Halpern (1992) argued the necessity of conducting research on sex differences noting that knowledge is preferable to ignorance. Differences between the sexes on mean score on ability tests have a long history. Tyler (1965) provides a useful overview as does Willerman (1979). In a meta-analysis, Hyde (1981) found the following median standardized mean differences on tests identified as measuring cognitive ability factors for men and women: .24 for verbal favoring women, .43 for quantitative favoring men, .45 for visual-spatial favoring men, and .51 for field articulation (defined as visual-analytic ability) favoring men. Burke (1995) observed that tests used in aviation selection are frequently those that favor men in mean score comparisons and called for the use of a compensatory model that balances the strengths of males and females.

Carretta (1997) examined mean score sex differences for the 16 tests used for United States Air Force (USAF) officer commissioning and pilot selection purposes. He found that large mean score differences between the sexes in officer commissioning applicant samples were substantially reduced among pilot trainees. Among the applicants, the standardized difference values favored the males for all 16 tests, although some were rather small. The mean standardized value was .44. After selection into pilot training, the standardized difference values were reduced, with a mean of .05.

Although groups may differ in means on tests, they may show similarity in the factors underlying those scores. Michael (1949); Humphreys and Taber (1973); Defries et al., (1974) studied factor similarity between ethnic groups and found few differences. Carretta and Ree (1995) and Ree and Carretta (1995) studied ethnic and sex group ability factor differences. For both ethnic and sex groups, they found a near identity of aptitude factor structure in both experiments with cross-group test loading correlations approaching 1.

#### **Causal Models**

Increasingly, path or causal models have been used to explain the relationships of variables in occupational settings. Hunter (1986) demonstrated the most general model relating ability, job knowledge, and job performance. He noted both a direct path from ability to job performance as well as an indirect path through job knowledge. His verified model showed ability leading to the acquisition of job knowledge which, in turn, led to job performance. Using cumulated meta-analyzed data, Hunter found a stronger direct path between ability and job performance for civilian versus military jobs. Ree et al. (1995) found a similar weak direct path in a military sample and, along with Hunter, speculated that the weak path is the result of the necessity to learn and apply myriad complex rules and procedures.

The Ree et al. (1995) model found significant causal paths relating ability (g), prior job knowledge (JK<sub>p</sub>), sequentially acquired training job knowledge (JK<sub>T1</sub>, JK<sub>T2</sub>, and JK<sub>T3</sub>) and work sample performance (WS<sub>1</sub> and WS<sub>2</sub>). This model is shown in Figure 1.

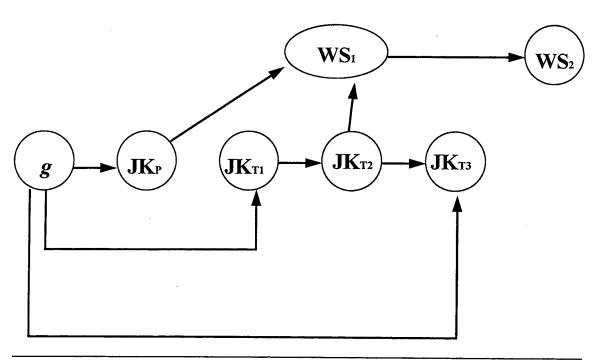


Figure 1. <u>Hypothesized Causal Model for Sequential Training</u>

There was a strong influence of g on the acquisition of all job knowledge. The early acquisition of job knowledge led to the later acquisition of job knowledge. Job knowledge showed a causal influence on early job performance as measured by flying work samples. Early job performance had a very strong causal influence on subsequent job performance.

Given the evidence of validity of g and job knowledge and the near identity of factor structure for the sexes, it is appropriate and informative to ask whether the same causal model would hold for each sex group. This experiment provides a preliminary answer to this question. If a different causal model were found for each sex group, this might be interpreted as justification for a separate training syllabus for men and women.

The results of this experiment must be interpreted with caution because of the small number of female pilots. A bigger sample would have been preferable, however, the total number of female pilots in the United States Air Force is very small and this sample represents a sizable portion of that total. Although the sample is small, it is presented so that it may be aggregated with other samples in future meta-analysis.

#### **METHOD**

#### **Participants**

The participants were 3,369 male and 59 female USAF officers who completed a 53-week undergraduate pilot training course between 1981 and 1993. They were predominantly white (96.8%), between about 22 and 27 years old, and had completed at least a baccalaureate degree from an accredited university or college. All had been selected for commissioning and undergraduate pilot training, in part, based on their scores on the Air Force Officer Qualifying Test (AFOQT) (Carretta & Ree, 1995; Skinner & Ree, 1987).

A selection board technique that rates applicants for admission to flying training is used by the USAF. Included are measures of academic achievement with a preference toward scientific majors, personal recommendations, medical fitness, and prior flying experience in some cases. These data are not retained in official archival files and were not available for this research effort.

#### Measures

g and Prior Job Knowledge

The measures of g and prior job knowledge were extracted from the AFOQT (Carretta & Ree, 1995, 1996). The AFOQT is based on a detailed taxonomy of test and item specifications that define the psychometric properties as well as the content of each test (Berger, Gupta, Berger, & Skinner, 1990; Gupta, Berger, & Skinner, 1989; Skinner & Ree, 1987).

The 16 tests that comprise the AFOQT provide measures of general cognitive ability (g), flying job knowledge, and four lower-order cognitive factors: verbal, quantitative, spatial, and perceptual speed (Carretta & Ree, 1996). In this experiment, verbal and quantitative tests-- the most universally accepted measures of general cognitive ability--were used to estimate g. The Instrument Comprehension and Aviation Information tests were used to assess prior job knowledge (JKp). Provided below are descriptions of the tests grouped by content.

Verbal tests. Verbal Analogies (VA) measures the ability to recognize relationships between words and to reason. Reading Comprehension (RC) assesses the ability to understand written paragraphs. Word Knowledge (WK) provides a measure of verbal ability through the use of synonyms.

Quantitative tests. Arithmetic Reasoning (AR) measures the ability to understand arithmetic relationships stated as word problems. Data Interpretation (DI) assesses the ability to extract information from tables and charts. Math Knowledge (MK) requires the ability to use mathematical formulas, terms, and relationships to solve problems. Scale Reading (SR) measures the ability to extract information from scales and dials.

Prior job knowledge tests. Only two tests in the AFOQT measure specific job knowledge (Dye, Reck, & McDaniel., 1993; Olea & Ree, 1994). Instrument Comprehension (IC) assesses the ability to determine the position and orientation in three-dimensional space of an aircraft in flight based on illustrations of flight instruments. Aviation Information (AI) measures knowledge of general aviation concepts, principles, and terminology.

#### Pilot Academic and Flying Grades

Pilot academic grades. Academic indicators measured student pilots' performance on written tests of flying theory, procedures, and aircraft-unique systems (i.e., hydraulics, instruments, electronics, etc.) learned during training. On each academic test, each student received a percent correct score. There were 11 end-of-course tests (A1 through A11) that were divided into three groups to represent early (A1 to A4), middle (A5 to A8), and late (A9 to A11) training. Early and middle classroom training were relevant to flying the subsonic primary training aircraft (T-37). Early classroom training included courses in T-37 systems, T-37 aerodynamics, aerospace physiology/human factors, and flying fundamentals. Middle classroom training provided courses relevant to flight in general and to flying the primary aircraft. Included were T-37 instruments I and II, T-37 navigation, and T-37 mission planning. Late classroom training was relevant to the supersonic advanced training aircraft (T-38) including applied aerodynamics, T-38 systems operations, and T-38 flight planning.

Flying work samples. There are two general categories of training flights in which students accumulate about 190 flying hours. On routine daily flights, the student pilot learns and practices under the watchful eye of an instructor pilot. After the prescribed ordinary daily flights, worksample tests called "check flights" are rated by check flight pilots. Check flight pilots do not rate students with whom they have flown on daily flights to eliminate potential bias due to familiarity.

Three check flights in the primary aircraft (CF1 to CF3) and three in the advanced aircraft (CF4 to CF6) are completed by student pilots during training. In the primary aircraft, students must (a) demonstrate the ability to fly to a geographical location, perform aerial maneuvers, and return to execute successful landings; (b) conduct airborne activities within precise geographical and altitude limits; and (c) use instruments with an emphasis on landing approaches.

All activities must be accomplished more rapidly in the advanced training aircraft because it is much faster than the primary training aircraft. This makes even familiar maneuvers more difficult.

The check flights for instruments and round trips to geographical areas are similar to the check flights in the primary aircraft. The difficult formation check flight is added in which the wings of multiple aircraft are as close as three feet at speeds of 400 knots. See Duke and Ree (1996) for a more complete description of check flights in the advanced aircraft.

Each check flight score was a weighted average of ratings of several flying maneuvers and procedures. These maneuvers, procedures, and scoring weights are prescribed by the Air Force in training regulations. The student pilot receives points for each procedure. Example procedures are: make proper radio calls during flight, retract landing gear at specified speed, or perform loop within specified parameters (e.g. maneuver entry altitude and engine power settings). Like academic grades, check flight grades were percentage scores.

The sequential pilot training was structured as follows. In the classroom, theory and general background were taught. This was followed by application in the aircraft. Classroom training for the primary aircraft began before check flight work samples. The ultimate check flight work sample in the primary training aircraft was completed after the last classroom instruction in middle training (A5 to A8). After check flights in the primary aircraft, classroom instruction on the advanced aircraft began. This was followed by advanced aircraft check flight work samples. The last advanced aircraft check flight work sample occurred after all classroom training was completed.

#### **Procedures**

The current experiment investigated the causal role of g and prior job knowledge for both men and women in flying training. Included were measures of g and job knowledge acquired prior to training, sequentially-ordered blocks of classroom training, and hands-on flying work sample performance measures.

The participants constituted a censored, range-restricted sample because they had been selected, at least in part, on the basis of the scores of the test battery that yielded the estimates of g and prior job knowledge. To correct the poor statistical estimates of the correlations among variables found in range restricted samples (Thorndike, 1949), we used the multivariate method of Lawley (1943; see also Ree, Carretta, Earles, & Albert, 1994). Male samples were corrected to a group of male applicants and females were corrected to a group of female applicants. Corrected matrices were used in all structural equation analyses.

The structural models (Bentler & Weeks, 1980) were estimated using maximum likelihood procedures as implemented in version 4.02 of the EQS program. This program corrects for unreliability using estimation procedures in the same fashion as LISREL and other structural modeling programs. The estimated reliabilities can either be provided as starting values or they can be estimated directly from the data as was done here.

First we fit the measurement models and then the path models as established in previous research. We reported the path coefficients as standardized regression coefficients (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) because the scales of measurement of the variables are not well known or intrinsically meaningful. These standardized path coefficients should be interpreted as indicating that a one standard deviation change in an independent variable leads to a change in the dependent variable equal to the magnitude of the coefficient. For example, if the path coefficient were .75, a one

standard deviation change in the independent variable would yield a .75 standard deviation change in the dependent variable.

Path models based on Ree et al. (1995) with only the statistically significant links were estimated for separate male and female samples.

#### RESULTS

The means and standard deviations for the variables both in observed form and after range restriction correction are presented in Table A1. Tables A2 and A3 present the correlation matrices for the male and female samples, both observed and corrected for range restriction.

Table 1.

<u>Correlations Between Factors in the Causal Model</u>

Factor	g	JK <sub>P</sub>	JK <sub>T1</sub>	$JK_{T2}$	$JK_{T3}$	$WS_1$	$\overline{WS_2}$
Males			······································				
g	1.00						
JK <sub>P</sub>	.63	1.00					
$JK_{T1}$	.62	.42	1.00				
JK <sub>T2</sub>	.55	.29	.87	1.00			
$JK_{T3}$	.59	.30	.85	.94	1.00		
$WS_1$	.32	.29	.44	.56	.54	1.00	
$WS_2$	.37	.36	.43	.54	.55	.91	1.00
<u>Females</u>							
g	1.00						
$JK_P$	.80	1.00					
JK <sub>T1</sub>	.76	.67	1.00				
$JK_{T2}$	.59	.36	.85	1.00			
JK <sub>T3</sub>	.84	.68	1.00	1.00	1.00		
$WS_1$	.71	.62	.32	.54	.73	1.00	
$WS_2$	.81	.50	.60	.82	.50	1.00	1.00

Note. g = general cognitive ability;  $JK_p =$  prior job knowledge;  $JK_{T1} =$  job knowledge acquired during training (measure 1);  $JK_{T2} =$  job knowledge acquired during training (measure 2);  $JK_{T3} =$  job knowledge acquired during training (measure 3);  $WS_1 =$  flying training work sample (measure 1); and  $WS_2 =$  flying training work sample (measure 2).

The intercorrelations of the factors as estimated from the corrected data for each sample are presented in Table 1. The variance accounted for in each dependent variable is presented in Table 2 and the structural coefficients are shown in Figure 2.

Table 2. Variance Accounted for (R<sup>2</sup>) in the Dependent Variables

	Males $(n = 3,369)$	Females $(n = 59)$	
$\overline{JK_P}$	.395	.658	
$JK_{T1}$	.396	.599	
$JK_{T2}$	.742	.628	
JK <sub>T3</sub>	.935	1.000	
$WS_1$	.333	.570	
$WS_2$	1.000	1.000	

Note. JKp = prior job knowledge; JK $_{T1}$  = job knowledge acquired during training (measure 1); JK $_{T2}$  = job knowledge acquired during training (measure 2); JK $_{T3}$  = job knowledge acquired during training (measure 3); WS $_{1}$  = flying training work sample (measure 1); and WS $_{2}$  = flying training work sample (measure 2).

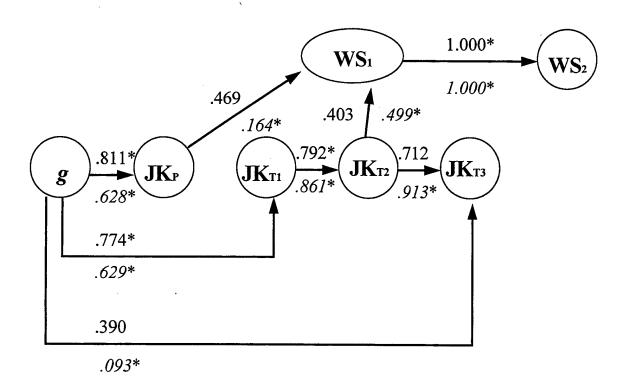


Figure 2. Causal Model for Sequential Training (Independent Male and Female Samples)

Note. (1) Male (n = 3,369) and female (n = 59) causal models were estimated independently. (2) All path coefficients were significant at p < .05. Those marked with an \* were significant at p < .01.

#### DISCUSSION

Group mean differences on the verbal and quantitative tests, measures of g, favored women. The opposite was true for the tests of prior job knowledge. The average standardized differences (d) on the verbal and quantitative tests were -.33 and .59 for the prior job knowledge. Each sex group brings different strengths to the training situation.

The means, standard deviations, and correlations after correction for range restriction represent the best statistical estimates. As would be expected, the corrected standard deviations increased and the corrected means decreased. The corrected correlations behaved in accordance with Lawley's (1943) theorem. For the large sample of males, positive manifold was observed. In the sample of females, the correlations were mostly positive. The reason for the lack of total positive manifold in the female sample cannot be known from these data, but variability due to small sample size is a reasonable explanation. The correlations for the factors show positive manifold for both the male and female samples.

The structural coefficients for the models for each group estimated independently showed general similarity, but with some differences. The causal effect of g on prior job knowledge was strong for both sexes. This was also true of the causal path from g to job knowledge acquired during training. A notable exception was the much greater influence for females than for males of g on JKT3 and WS2. The total causal influence of g on JKT3 was .826 for females and .587 for males. Similarly, the total causal influence of g on WS2 was .627 for females and .373 for males. However, it should be noted that the variance accounted for on JKT3 and WS2 was about the same for both males and females. This can be interpreted as showing that the antecedents have about the same cumulative effect.

The causal influence for prior job knowledge on work sample performance appeared weaker for males than for females. The causal influence of job knowledge acquired during training on subsequent job knowledge and work sample performance was stronger for males than for females as shown by the coefficients between JKT1 and JKT2 and between JKT3.

Because of the small differences between men and women in the causal paths from g to  $JK_{T1}$  to  $JK_{T2}$  to  $JK_{T3}$ , it appears that the dependence on ability and job knowledge for the acquisition of later job knowledge is similar for both groups. Further, because the variance accounted for in  $JK_{T3}$  and  $WS_2$ , the two end-of-training dependent variables, was about equal for men and women, any argument for a sex-separated training syllabus is not supported.

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# APPENDIX A

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Matrices for Male and Female Pilot Trainees

Table A1.

Means and Standard Deviations for Tests, Academic Grades, and Check Flight Grades

	Obser	rved	Corrected for Ra	inge Restriction
	Males	Females	Males	Females
	(n = 3,369)	(n = 59)	(n = 3,369)	(n = 59)
Score	Mean SD	Mean SD	Mean SD	Mean SD
VA	15.27 3.36	16.76 2.85	14.25 4.34	14.13 4.73
AR	13.53 4.12	13.95 3.42	12.52 5.00	10.29 4.81
RC	17.39 4.73	20.34 3.78	15.80 5.62	15.24 5.87
DI	13.51 3.91	14.19 3.83	12.89 4.66	11.49 4.52
WK	13.91 5.16	17.00 5.02	13.86 5.73	13.35 5.94
MK	17.98 4.63	19.68 4.36	15.10 5.91	13.34 5.96
SR	24.23 5.55	24.44 5.48	21.55 6.61	18.28 6.64
IC	13.71 4.21	11.02 4.97	10.48 5.04	6.68 3.85
AI	11.78 4.25	9.42 4.12	9.11 4.13	6.05 2.79
A1	97.46 3.08	97.09 4.44	96.81 3.15	92.80 5.44
A2	97.17 3.33	97.62 3.09	96.68 3.38	95.11 3.49
A3	97.04 3.36	97.03 3.49	96.62 3.40	94.28 4.32
A4	98.07 3.28	97.50 3.26	97.37 3.36	97.44 3.32
A5	95.97 4.80	96.83 4.35	95.24 4.89	95.47 4.51
A6	95.17 5.33	95.70 4.52	94.52 5.38	93.97 5.45
A7	94.75 5.37	96.07 4.08	94.07 5.46	96.02 4.25
A8	95.86 4.56	97.23 3.95	95.34 4.61	93.89 4.44
A9	97.36 3.32	97.61 3.37	96.89 3.37	94.99 3.52
A10	97.29 3.63	97.62 3.70	96.80 3.69	96.74 3.96
A11	96.82 3.70	97.08 3.04	96.24 3.76	94.87 3.39
CF1	86.57 7.57	87.90 6.86	85.53 7.62	84.84 8.26
CF2	90.64 5.76	91.68 3.50	89.94 5.80	89.68 4.03
CF3	93.56 4.89	95.32 3.57	92.83 4.94	93.13 3.78
CF4	91.20 5.72	91.52 4.97	90.34 5.77	91.47 5.20
CF5	92.66 4.67	92.22 4.23	92.15 4.69	91.66 4.69
CF6	93.82 4.73	93.75 4.37	93.14 4.78	89.54 5.53

Notes. (1) The 9 AFOQT tests are: VA = Verbal Analogies, AR = Arithmetic Reasoning, RC = Reading Comprehension, DI = Data Interpretation, WK = Word Knowledge, MK = Mathematics Knowledge, SR = Scale Reading, IC = Instrument Comprehension, and AI = Aviation Information. The 11 flying training academic grades are A1 through A11. The 6 flying training check flight grades are CF1 through CF6.

<sup>(2)</sup> Means and standard deviations were corrected for range restriction (Lawley, 1943).

Table A2. Correlation Matrix (Males, n = 3,369)

CF6	05	80	90	10	02	12	13	80	01	80	80	90	07	12	12	10	07	60	14	11	17	17	19	16	15	100
CF5	03	04	01	90	00	05	90	60	07	04	05	05	05	60	80	80	90	05	80	05	21	19	19	19	100	16
CF4	01	90	07	08	-05	07	10	10	03	07	90	05	10	80	10	60	80	10	14	60	21	19	19	100	20	18
CF3	90	60	90	10	03	12	13	80	04	12	07	14	10	16	12	10	10	11	11	13	25	28	100	20	20	21
CF2	05	80	03	10	02	07	11	60	05	80	90	90	80	11	14	10	12	11	13	11	25	100	29	20	20	19
CF1	01	07	8	80	00	05	60	10	80	07	05	07	10	14	13	11	10	10	12	12	100	26	26	22	22	19
A11																	18									
A10,																	17									
A9	1																22									
A8																	100									
A7	1																22									
A6																	21									
A5	1 .				_												26									
A4	1																16									
A3																	18									
A2	l .																19									
A1	١. ـ	_															15									
AI	1																11									
IC																	11									
SR	1																20									
MK	l																18									
WK	l _																13									
ī																	19									
RC	Ι.																16									
AR																	20									
VA	100																									
Score VA AR RC DI WK MK SR IC	VA 1																									

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(2) The 9 AFOQT tests Are: VA = Verbal Analogies, AR = Arithmetic Reasoning, RC = Reading Comprehension, DI = Data Interpretation, WK = Word Knowledge, MK = Mathematics Knowledge, SR = Scale Reading, IC = Instrument Comprehension, and AI = Aviation Information. The 11 flying training academic grades are A1 through A11. The 6 flying training check flight grades are CF1 through CF6. Notes. (1) Correlations above the diagonal are observed data. Those below the diagonal were corrected for range restriction (Lawley, 1943).

Table A3. Correlation Matrix (Females, n = 59)

CF6	1																									100
CF5																										15
CF4 (	01	-14	00	-10	80	-14	02	07	17	-03	05	10	-04	-19	-02	30	-18	60	-16	60	23	04	18	100	-01	01
CF3 (	60	14	-04	07	-10	-05	38	38	26	-03	-10	-01	-10	90-	-10	80	00	02	60	15	24	30	100	15	29	33
CF2 (																										18
CF1 (																										21
A11 (	12	24	19	15	9	16	60	-05	10	26	90	00	07	12	14	11	19	01	16	00	23	26	35	80	26	39
A10 /	05	30	-05	31	80-	16	14	-04	00	25	15	-05	14	12	41	25	22	20	00	24 1	31	22	20	19	60	24
A9 /	10	01	17	-03	07	20	-03	16	34	36	33	37 .	22	00	31	35	19	00	25 1	13	01	15	05	. 10	-15	29
A8	25	30	25	9	24	26	16	-03	40	20	46	01	07	34	33	60-	001	25 1	28	32	11	25	23	13	19	28
A7	07	-11	-11	90	-07	01	-01	00	32	13	13	00	04	-07	31	. 00	-08	27	34	13	35	20	03	20 -	22	00
A6	34	18	23	03	15	Ξ	10	9	01	40	47	11	24 -	29	00	40 1	37	39	49	27	28	43	03	-10	29	21
A5								-23																		
A4	-03	-07	-02	-07	00	01	-10	03	14	24	26	29	00	10 1	80	13 .	90.	14	07	00	21	05	-16	. 40	.13	60
A3	16	18	18	-05	13	39	02	-03	13	33	30	00	20 1	27	25	-02 -	11	47	05	15	-03	03 -	60	40	13	20
A2								10																		
A1								07																		
AI								49																		
IC	1							100																		
SR	l							48																•		
DI WK MK	1							38																		
WK								28																•		
DI	43	59	37	100	45	55	61	44	24	33	30	15	90-	13	18	13	23	11	46	36	23	20	28	60-	32	13
RC								33																		
AR								43					-													
VA	100																									
Score VA AR RC	VA																		_							

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(2) The 9 AFOQT tests Are: VA = Verbal Analogies, AR = Arithmetic Reasoning, RC = Reading Comprehension, DI = Data Interpretation, WK = Word Knowledge, MK = Mathematics Knowledge, SR = Scale Reading, IC = Instrument Comprehension, and AI = Aviation Information. The 11 flying training Notes (1) Correlations above the diagonal are observed data. Those below the diagonal were corrected for range restriction (Lawley, 1943). academic grades are A1 through A11. The 6 flying training check flight grades are CF1 through CF6.